

Written Statement of Rep. James P. McGovern (MA-02)  
Testimony before the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee  
March 9, 2017

Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member Bishop, and Members of the Agriculture Subcommittee – thank you for allowing me to testify before you today.

As your Subcommittee begins drafting the FY18 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies appropriations legislation, I strongly urge you to provide robust funding for programs that work to end hunger across our country.

In the richest country in the history of the world, I find it unconscionable that 42 million Americans – including more than 13 million children and 5 million seniors– live in food insecure households. We will end hunger in the United States someday. We have the power and the resources. What we lack right now is the political will.

Last week I testified before the House Budget Committee in support of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, a mandatory program. I urged the Committee to protect the structure of SNAP, our nation’s first line of defense against hunger, and oppose any efforts to cut funding.

With respect to SNAP, I urge this Committee to provide at least \$3 billion for the **SNAP reserve account** to ensure people have continued access to benefits even if the program incurs unanticipated expenses.

I also ask the subcommittee to provide robust funding for several discretionary accounts that, together with SNAP, work to reduce hunger in this country.

The **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants & Children (WIC)**

provides 8 million low-income pregnant and parenting women and children access to nutritious food, education, and other services. I strongly urge the Committee to fully fund WIC at \$3.36 billion, including at least \$90 million for the breastfeeding peer counseling program.

I also want to highlight the work of charitable organizations, like our food banks, in alleviating hunger across our country. But the truth of the matter is, Mr. Chairman, charities alone cannot solve hunger. It takes a strong federal commitment, as well.

**The Emergency Food Assistance Program**, known as TEFAP, provides highly nutritious food that food banks pair with donated items to craft packages for their clients. Although TEFAP commodities funding is mandatory, **TEFAP Storage and Distribution Funds** are discretionary. I urge the Committee to fully fund the Storage and Distribution account at \$100 million.

I also urge this Committee to increase funding in **Title IV for the Office of the Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services**. Staffing levels at the U.S.

Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (USDA FNS) are the same as they were in 2003. Staff at FNS are focused on SNAP integrity, in large part due to additional funds provided in the 2014 farm bill for that purpose. At the same time, other missions, including child nutrition and regional operations, suffer.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to say a few words about our international food aid programs.

First, as you know, I led the effort to create the **George McGovern-Robert Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program**. McGovern-Dole has provided millions of the most vulnerable children in the world with a nutritious meal in a school setting for over a decade. Each year, USDA receives more proposals than it can fund, highlighting the need to expand the program, rather than reduce funding.

I have visited McGovern-Dole programs in Latin America and Africa, and I can testify that they advance the health and productivity of children, improve their school performance, increase attendance rates, especially among girls, and solidify community support for education, health and nutrition. At a minimum, funding for McGovern-Dole should continue at FY 2017 levels, and increase, if possible.

Second, **PL 480 Title II – Food for Peace** – is our most important humanitarian food aid program, as well as supporting projects on chronic food insecurity. As the world faces its greatest refugee crisis since World War II, we cannot cut funding for this program. It is simply unfathomable to think otherwise. This program supports American farmers, whose commodities literally save tens of millions of lives each year. The program is now even more effective in getting food to those in need rapidly and effectively, combining Meals-Ready-to-Eat, vouchers, cash grants, local purchase, and U.S. commodities. It needs to receive at least FY 2017 levels, and more if budget constraints allow.

McGovern-Dole and Food for Peace advance U.S. national interests and reflect the very best of American values. I urge continued, robust funding for each.

Lastly, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to speak briefly about an issue unrelated to food and nutrition policy. Since 2008, my hometown of Worcester, Massachusetts has been dealing with the largest Asian Longhorned Beetle infestation in North America. More than 35,000 trees have been cut down and eradication and replanting efforts continue. I urge this Subcommittee to provide at least \$54 million for **Tree and Wood Pests** under **USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service**, including at least \$42 million for efforts to eradicate the Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) with no state or local cost share requirement.

Mr. Chairman, as you craft your FY18 appropriations legislation, I ask that you consider the millions of Americans and people across the world who rely on federal anti-hunger programs to feed their families, and I ask that you provide robust funding for these programs and reject harmful riders that seek to undermine these programs. At a minimum, I ask that this Committee do nothing to make hunger worse.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today.